

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

PRS-01 PA-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 OPR-02

A-01 MMO-01 OC-06 CCO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

AS-01 FBO-02 SCS-03 SCCT-01 DHA-02 AID-05 H-02 L-03

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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:GSHERMAN:PDW

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O 161710Z JUL 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL STUTTGART IMMEDIATE

CINCEUR IMMEDIATE

CINCNAVEUR IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: PRESS GUIDANCE ON EVACUATION FROM BEIRUT

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1. FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS GROWING OUT OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE EVACUATION IS BEING USED BY THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN. POSTS MAY DRAW ON IT AS REQUIRED IN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS.

2. Q. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO PROMPT SUCH A DRASTIC STEP AT THIS TIME?

A. NO SINGLE DEVELOPMENT HAS PROMPTED THIS DECISION. IT IS SIMPLY A RESULT OF THE EVOLVING SITUATION. AS YOU KNOW YOURSELVES FROM PRESS REPORTS, LIVING CONDITIONS IN BEIRUT HAVE BEEN STEADILY DETERIORATING OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS. TELEPHONE SERVICE, FUEL, WATER AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEMS HAVE BROKEN DOWN; THE UNCERTAIN SECURITY SITUATION MAKES IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO MOVE AROUND THE CITY. SOME OFFICIAL AMERICAN PERSONNEL HAVE DEPARTED IN THE WEEKS SINCE THE AMERICAN EVACUATION BY SEA JUNE 20, THROUGH AT LEAST TWO INTERNATIONAL ROAD CONVOYS TO DAMASCUS. THIS LATEST MOVE IS A CONTINUATION OF THAT REDUCTION. OTHER EMBASSIES HAVE LEFT OR HAVE ALREADY REDUCED THEIR PERSONNEL DRASTICALLY, AND NOW WE ARE MOVING TO DO THE SAME.

Q. IS THIS A MOVE TOWARD CLOSING THE EMBASSY COMPLETELY?

A. I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT WE ARE KEEPING A FUNCTIONAL EMBASSY IN BEIRUT, CHARGED WITH CONTINUING TO CARRY OUT AS BEST IT CAN THE MISSION WE HAVE REPEATEDLY ENUNCIATED OVER THE PAST WEEKS.

IF PRESSED ON MISSION:

A. TO KEEP THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY ABREAST OF THE SITUATION AND TO DO WHATEVER IT CAN AS AND WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT TO HELP THE LEBANESE PARTIES BEGIN A PROCESS OF POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION.

Q. DOES NOT YOUR ANNOUNCEMENT TELL ANY AMERICAN CITIZEN IN LEBANON THAT HIS GOVERNMENT IS NO LONGER IN A POSITION TO PROTECT HIM THERE?

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A. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT CERTAINLY RECOGNIZES ITS CONTINUING RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT, AS IT CAN, AMERICAN CITIZENS IN LEBANON. WE WILL MAINTAIN A FUNCTIONING EMBASSY IN BEIRUT WHICH WILL CARRY OUT ITS DUTIES AS BEST IT IS ABLE IN THE DANGEROUS SITUATION THERE. THE POINT IS THAT DETERIORATING CONDITIONS MAKE IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO PROVIDE CONSULAR SERVICES TO THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY. EMBASSY PEOPLE CANNOT MOVE AROUND THE CITY

AND PEOPLE HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN GETTING TO THE EMBASSY. PASSPORT, VISA, PROTECTION SERVICES AND INNUMERABLE OTHER CONSULAR FUNCTIONS ARE DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, IN THIS LOCAL ENVIRONMENT. THEREFORE, AS THE ANNOUNCEMENT STATES, WE HAVE DECIDED TO CUT OUR EMBASSY STAFF TO A BARE MINIMUM AND STRONGLY URGED AGAIN THAT ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

Q. IS AMBASSADOR SEELYE STAYING?

A. WE ARE STILL STUDYING THAT QUESTION.

Q. WHAT IS TO BE THE MEANS OF EVACUATION?

A. THAT IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION.

Q. WILL THE U.S. NAVY BE USED AS BEFORE?

A. WE ARE EXAMINING SEVERAL POSSIBLE WAYS TO MOVE, ALL NON-MILITARY, AND YOU SHOULD NOT ASSUME THAT THIS EVACUATION WILL BE A REPLAY OF THE JUNE 20 OPERATION.

Q. WHAT MEANS ARE AVAILABLE?

A. I JUST CANNOT GET INTO THIS WHOLE QUESTION FURTHER. WHEN WE HAVE SOMETHING TO ANNOUNCE ABOUT THE MEANS OF EVACUATION, YOU WILL KNOW.

IF PRESSED ON POSSIBLE USE OF U.S. NAVY:

A. UNITS OF THE SIXTH FLEET REMAIN IN READINESS FOR POSSIBLE USE IN AN EVACUATION UNDER CONDITIONS OF EMERGENCY, AS THEY HAVE FOR THE PAST MONTH; HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESENTLY PLANNING A MILITARY MOVE.

Q. ARE YOU REDUCING YOUR EMBASSY STAFF BECAUSE THE PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST FORCES ARE NO LONGER WILLING OR ABLE TO CONTINUE THEIR PROTECTION OF THE EMBASSY?

A. NO, THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED. BUT GIVEN THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND DETERIORATING LIVING CONDITIONS, WE HAVE DECIDED TO MAKE THIS MOVE AT THIS TIME.

Q. ARE YOU CUTTING DOWN THE EMBASSY BECAUSE OF THE DANGER THAT A DESPERATE PLO WILL USE OUR PEOPLE AS HOSTAGES?

A. FOR ANYONE TO ACT AS YOU SUGGEST WOULD BE TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE.

Q. HAS A NEW LEBANESE TASK FORCE BEEN FORMED IN THE DEPARTMENT TO HANDLE THIS OPERATION?

A. A SMALL INTERDEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP UNDER THE NEA BUREAU IS DEALING WITH THE MECHANICS OF THIS OPERATION.

Q. ARE YOU IN TOUCH WITH THE PLO OR WITH ARAB GOVERNMENTS TO ARRANGE SECURITY FOR THE OPERATION?

A. AS WE DID THE LAST TIME, WE ARE COMMUNICATING OUR INTENTIONS TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE INVOLVED. IT SERVES NO PURPOSE TO GO INTO DETAIL AT THIS TIME.

IF PRESSED ABOUT CONTACTS WITH PLO:

A. IF WHAT YOU ARE GETTING AT IS WHETHER OUR POLICY TOWARD THE PLO HAS CHANGED--THE ANSWER IS NO. BUT THE PALESTINIANS ARE CLEARLY AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN MAINTAINING SECURITY IN WEST BEIRUT. THEREFORE, ANY ARRANGEMENTS RELATING TO SECURITY NECESSARILY INVOLVES THEM.

Q. HOW MANY AMERICAN OFFICIALS WILL REMAIN? HOW MANY ARE THERE NOW?

A. THIRTY-SIX OFFICIALS ARE THERE NOW (COMPARED TO 53 IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE MIDDLE OF JUNE), AND WE EXPECT ABOUT 10 TO 15 TO REMAIN.

Q. WHAT IS YOUR ESTIMATE OF THE PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZENS NOW IN LEBANON?

A. IT IS HARD TO GIVE YOU A PRECISE FIGURE FOR THE WHOLE OF LEBANON. FOR THE WEST BEIRUT AREA, WE ESTIMATE SEVERAL HUNDRED, INCLUDING ALIEN DEPENDENTS. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT MOST OF THESE ARE MORE OR LESS PERMANENT RESIDENTS WHO HAVE NEVER INDICATED ANY INTENTION OF LEAVING. KISSINGER

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